

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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WHOOPING CRANE POPULATION GROWS TO RECORD 55

The world's population of wild whooping cranes has increased to a record 55--with the possibility of more birds to come--the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife reported today.

An aerial survey on Nov. 20 at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, where the rare birds arrive for the winter after spending the summer in the Canadian wilds, revealed 47 adult and 8 young whoopers on the refuge grounds and adjacent Matagorda Island.

This tops last year's record of 50 which consisted of 44 adults and 6 young. Wild whoopers numbered just 15 in 1941, exceeded 30 in 1947 and topped 40 in 1964.

The possibility exists of additional Aransas arrivals. Migration normally ends in late November, but last year a final whooper showed up on Dec. 14.

In addition to the wild whoopers, 23 of these majestic cranes, North America's tallest birds, are held in captivity--17 at the Bureau's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center near Laurel, Md., 4 at Audubon Park Zoo in New Orleans, and 2 at San Antonio Zoo. Fifteen of Patuxent's 17 have resulted from whooping crane egg pickups in Canada the past three years.

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